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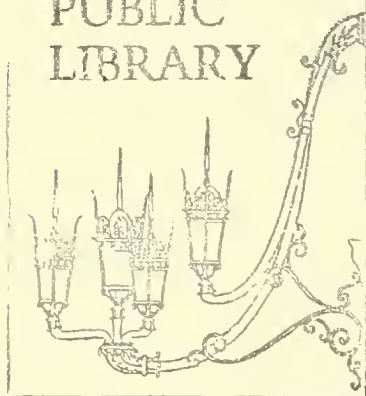
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Boston Redevelopment Authority

FROM: Edward J. Logue, Development Administrator

DATE: February 16, 1967

SUBJECT: Reclamation of Mill Pond and Mother Brook ✓

The attached report outlines a proposal to acquire and reclaim 50 acres of land in Hyde Park along Mother Brook for recreational purposes. As indicated in the 1965/75 General Plan, Mother Brook is an important waterway linking the Charles and Neponset Rivers. Implementation of the Mill Pond and Mother Brook proposals contained in this report would result in the reclamation of a 27 acre Mill Pond, and the development of another 20 acres for recreational use.

This proposal is urgent in that private commercial development threatens a portion of the pond site. Several months ago, a change in zoning was requested to allow the use of the site for a shopping center. The request was approved by the Zoning Commission despite the objection that the 1965/75 General Plan designates this area as open space. The site, now zoned for commercial use, is presently for sale.

It is requested that the Board of the Redevelopment Authority review this proposal and take it under advisement.

Attachment

RECLAMATION OF MILL POND AND MOTHER BROOK

SUMMARY

This report proposes the acquisition, reclamation and development of the Mill Pond area and portions of land adjacent to Mother Brook in Hyde Park for recreational purposes. The proposal is a part of the total system of open spaces recommended in the 1965/75 General Plan for Boston, and is an important recreational link between the Charles and Neponset Rivers. The proposal is urgent in that private commercial development threatens the destruction of a portion of the Mill Pond site - one of the few remaining pieces of water-oriented vacant land in the City of Boston.

Implementation of the proposal would result in the reclamation of Mill Pond with a water area of approximately 27 acres and the provision of another 20 acres of adjacent banks and stream shoreline for recreational purposes. In addition to the beginning of a recreational link between the Charles and Neponset Rivers, this proposal would extend the southern portion of Stony Brook Reservation, provide it with a new water-oriented recreation facility, and extend trails along the banks of Mother Brook toward existing MDC holdings on the Neponset River.

Aside from Stony Brook, abutting land uses are predominately residential. A city-owned cemetery, Fairview, borders the northern edge of the pond site, and some commercial and industrial uses are scattered along Mother Brook and clustered near the confluence of Mother Brook and the Neponset River.

Acquisition of thirteen parcels of land is proposed. Totaling nearly 50 acres in land and water area, the assessed value of these parcels is approximately \$107,000. Using current and recent tax equalization ratios, the market value of these parcels is roughly estimated at between \$130,000 and \$170,000. Of the 50 acres, approximately six are presently in public ownership; the remainder must be acquired by direct purchase. With the exception of two parcels, the remaining land is undeveloped. Acquisition and demolition of one dwelling, one warehouse, and a few small accessory structures are required.

In order to develop fully the recreational potential of Mill Pond and Mother Brook, this report proposes several types of improvements. The reclamation of Mill Pond will require the repair of a dam and the excavation of accumulated silt and fill from the pond bed. Landscaping will be required in some areas to enhance the natural beauty of the site. Opportunities will be available for the provision of facilities for boating, picnicking, hiking, and other types of active recreation. Assuming eventual improvement in the quality of water in Mother Brook, the report urges the construction of facilities for swimming in the pond. It is estimated that the total cost of improving the site will be \$295,000.

If the open space, landscape, and recreational potential of Mill Pond and Mother Brook are to be realized, prompt action is necessary. Once filled in and built upon, the pond will never be regained. The urgency of this situation has required that attention be brought to this matter in advance of a forthcoming plan for the acquisition and development of open land in the City of Boston for recreational purposes.

THE MILL POND AND MOTHER BROOK

The 1965/75 General Plan recognizes Mother Brook as an important waterway link between the Charles and Neponset Rivers and recommends recreational development along Mother Brook, Mill Pond, and the Neponset River to Dorchester Bay. Open space studies currently being completed by the Metropolitan Planning Council contain recommendations for Mother Brook as part of an overall regional system of open space. The Open Space study for the City of Boston currently being developed by the Planning Department of the Boston Redevelopment Authority is relating this proposed acquisition of Mother Brook/Mill Pond to other areas along the Neponset and Upper Charles Rivers as part of a continuous system of water-related open spaces along the southern edge of the City.

Until a few years ago, there was a Mill Pond on Mother Brook in Hyde Park about 27 acres in water surface. A well-traveled road, River Street, bordered and crossed a portion of the pond, affording the passing motorist a view of the water. A city-owned cemetery, Fairview, abuts the upper portion of the pond area, and the southern finger of Stony Brook Reservation lies across River Street from the pond site. Other neighboring uses are largely residential, with some commercial and industrial uses along Mother Brook downstream to its confluence with the Neponset.

Most of the property covered by the pond area is privately owned. The largest segment under one owner consists of two contiguous

parcels totaling 17.5 acres owned by the Lynn Corporation. While the ownership status of portions of the upper pond area is not entirely clear at this time, the balance of the pond basin is part of Fairview Cemetery.

Several years ago, the owner of the two parcels totaling 17.5 acres breached the mill dam and drained the pond. Now the stream meanders through a weedy wilderness, and some property owners have encroached upon the original lines of the pond with the construction of accessory structures, and, in one instance, the outdoor storage of junked cars. The owner of the land to the east of the River Street bridge has started filling the pond bed, and recently requested a change in zoning to allow the use of the site for a shopping center. The Boston Zoning Commission approved the change over the objection that the 1965/75 General Plan designated this area as open space. The owner still must apply for a hearing before the State Department of Natural Resources for permission to continue the filling operation, under the Hatch Act of 1965, for the protection of flood plains. However, the Department cannot refuse permission only on the grounds that this land would be better held as open space.

It appears that the most straight-forward method of securing the restoration and preservation of Mill Pond would be direct purchase. The property has been offered for sale for some months. The zoning change which was granted can be counted on to raise the purchase price; an adverse decision by the Department of Natural Resources would lower it.

ACQUISITION PROPOSALS

In order to assure the permanent protection of this potentially important water recreation area, actions should be initiated now which will lead to the direct purchase of this land. The areas which are recommended for acquisition include: 1) land comprising the former pond area, 2) adjacent land which must be acquired in order to provide access to the water area and for supporting recreational facilities, and 3) additional downstream land adjacent to Mother Brook which should be acquired as a step toward linking the Mill Pond development with other existing MDC holdings on the Neponset River at its confluence with Mother Brook.

Acquisition of Former Pond Bed

Acquisition of three parcels totaling 26.8 acres is required in order to reclaim the Mill Pond. Included among these is the parcel for which the zoning change was recently granted. During the summer of 1966, this parcel was reassessed for \$29,000 from a previous assessment of \$2,000. The assessments of the three parcels total \$30,500.

Acquisition of Land Adjacent to the Pond

Acquisition of five parcels totaling 8.19 acres is required so that improved access can be provided to the Mill Pond. Four of these parcels are undeveloped - the other parcel consists of a small house and hards used for the storage of junked cars. Two of the parcels are already in public ownership. The assessed values of the remaining parcels total \$9,300.

Acquisition of Land Adjacent to Mother Brook below Mill Pond

Acquisition of one parcel and portions of several other properties along Mother Brook totaling 12.5 acres is recommended in order to further the recreational usefulness of the downstream portions of Mother Brook. All of these properties are undeveloped except one. This parcel of four acres contains an old multi-story brick mill building. While it is presently used as a warehouse for a waste company, its condition and appearance indicate that it should be acquired in order to gain this additional land for recreational purposes. The assessed values of these properties, including the brick mill building, total \$67,000.

Summary of Proposed Acquisitions

The properties recommended for acquisition, with their assessed values are as follows:

	Approximate Acres	Assessed Value	Method of Acquisition
<u>Pond Site:</u>			
	9.50	\$ 29,000(1)	Purchase
	8.00	1,500	Purchase
	9.30	(2)	Transfer or Purchase
Subtotal	26.80	\$ 30,500	
<u>Adjacent Banks:</u>			
	0.54	\$ 1,000	Purchase
	5.80	--	Transfer from Cemetery Division, Boston Park and Recreation Department
	1.00	2,100	Purchase
	0.62	6,200	Purchase
	0.23	--	Transfer from Boston Real Property Department
Subtotal	8.19	\$ 9,300	
<u>Mother Brook, downstream:</u>			
	4.00	\$ 45,000	Purchase
	2.60	5,750(3)	Purchase
	1.70	3,650(3)	Purchase
	3.20	10,400	Purchase or Highway Beautification Program
	1.00	2,200(3)	Purchase or Highway Beautification Program
Subtotal	12.50	\$ 67,000	
TOTAL	47.49	\$ 106,800	
ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE		\$ 130,000 - \$170,000(4)	

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- (1) Recently reappraised from \$2,000.
 - (2) No record of ownership or value of this property has been found.
 - (3) Value of flood plain land estimated at 5¢ per square foot for parts of parcels.
 - (4) Assumes that current and recent tax equalization ratios are indicative of approximate true market value.

5725

(8)

(4)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The reclamation of Mill Pond will require repairing of the dam at Knight Street and the removal of silt and fill from the pond bed. While much of the site can remain in its present natural condition, landscaping will be required in some areas to enhance the appearance of the area and to serve as screening of adjacent uses. Development of the site for recreational purposes should include facilities for boating and boat storage. The banks of Mill Pond should be provided with facilities for picnicking, strolling, play areas, and shelters. Automobile access to the northern side of the pond should be expanded and improved with some parking facilities.

The banks of the lower portions of Mother Brook should remain primarily in their present natural state. However, footpaths, sitting areas, and landscaping for screening purposes should be provided. Should subsequent study indicate that the waters of Mother Brook and Mill Pond are suitable for swimming, the development of small beach areas and other facilities for swimming would enhance the recreational usefulness of the area.

The following table indicates the estimated development costs
for Mill Pond and Mother Brook:

1.	Repair of dam, excavation of silt and fill in pond.	\$116,000
2.	Grading, seeding of portions of site	\$ 17,500
3.	General Landscaping	\$ 7,500
4.	Boat and equipment storage, sanitary facilities.	\$ 25,000
5.	Picnic shelters	\$ 16,000
6.	Boats	\$ 3,200
7.	Paving, walkways, parking areas, boat ramps, dock area.	\$ 12,700
8.	Play areas	\$ 22,500
9.	Picnic tables and other facilities.	\$ 5,500
10.	Miscellaneous landscaping, lighting and other.	\$ 20,000
Subtotal		\$245,900
Engineering and fees (20%)		\$ 49,180
TOTAL IMPROVEMENTS		\$295,080



